
R E P O R T

FROM THE

Committee on Acts relative to the Linen
Manufacture of Ireland.

Ordered to be printed 10th May 1802.

The COMMITTEE appointed to consider of so much of several Acts, passed by the PARLIAMENT of IRELAND, relative to the better Regulation of the LINEN and HEMPEN Manufacture, as relates to the ascertaining the Quality of the FLAX SEED imported into Ireland; and to report the same, together with their Observations thereupon, to the House:—Have considered the several Matters referred to them, and have agreed upon the following Report:

YOUR COMMITTEE find, That by an Act passed in the Parliament of Ireland, 17 and 18 GEO. III. C. 21. S. 5. it was Enacted, That after the 1st of August 1778, the Collector or Chief Officer of any Port into which any Importation of Flax Seed or Hemp Seed should be made, should immediately after the landing of the same, and before Payment of the Bounty, summon and convene (and he was thereby authorized and empowered so to do) Three Persons, not Importers of Flax Seed, such as he should judge best skilled in Flax Seed; to whom he was thereby required and empowered to administer an Oath that they would, to the best of their Capacity, give full and true Judgment in respect to the Soundness and Quality of such Flax Seed and Hemp Seed as should be produced to them, and declare in like Manner whether the same was or was not fit for the Purpose of sowing; and that the said Collector or Chief Officer should produce to the said several Persons such Cask or Casks of Flax Seed or Hemp Seed as should be imported as aforesaid, and the said Persons should report their Judgment thereof to the said Collector or Chief Officer, in Writing, with their Names subscribed thereto; and if in the said Report Two or more of them should declare that they
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had viewed all and every Cask of the said Flax Seed or Hemp Seed, expressing the Number exhibited to them, and that they were of Opinion that the same was clean, and of sound and good Quality, and fit for sowing, that then the said Collector or Chief Officer should, and he was thereby required and directed, to brand or otherwise mark, at or near the Bung Hole, each and every of the said Casks, with a Mark expressing the Year and Month the same should have been so inspected and approved of by the said Persons so summoned and convened as aforesaid; for every which Brand or Mark the Sum of Six Pence per Cask, and no more, was to be paid by the Importer to the said Collector or Chief Officer for marking or branding the same; and that no Bounty granted by any Laws then in being, should be paid to the Importer of any Flax Seed or Hemp Seed, which had not been first inspected, reported, branded, or marked as aforesaid.

That, by an Act passed in the Parliament of Ireland, 19 and 20 GEO. III. C. 33. S. 1. it was Enacted, That after the 24th of June 1780, no Bounty or Premium should be paid for any Flax Seed imported into Ireland.

That, by an Act passed in the Parliament of Ireland, 23 and 24 GEO. III. C. 53, S. 25, reciting the said Act 17 and 18 GEO. III. it was Enacted, That from and after the passing of that Act, in order to prevent any bad Seed which should be imported from being sold for sowing, whenever any Two of the said Three Persons summoned by the Collector or other Officer, pursuant to the Provision in the said Act, to view any Flax Seed or Hemp Seed, should not report their Opinion that the same was of sound Quality, or fit for sowing, the said Seed, and the Casks in which the same was contained, should be detained in the King's Stores till the first Day of July next following the Importation thereof, and should then be delivered, without Fee or Reward, to the Importer, upon his giving sufficient Security, which Security the Collector or other Chief Officer was thereby authorized and required to take, that the Whole of the said Flax Seed should be exported, or made into Oil in the said Kingdom, before the first Day of February next following; and if the Importer or Importers should

should not give such Security before the Twenty-ninth Day of September next following the first Day of July as aforesaid, such Flax Seed or Hemp Seed, and the Cask or Casks wherein the same was contained, should be sold by Public Auction, to the Person who should offer the highest Price for the same, and enter into like Security, or should be publicly burned or otherwise destroyed on Failure of a Bidder or Bidders who should give such Security.

That, by an Act of the same Parliament, 37 Geo. III. C. 61. S. 4. reciting, That Flax Seed and Hemp Seed, which had been regularly branded at the Time of Importation as being sound and fit for sowing, had been afterwards sold or exposed to Sale, although such Seed might, after the branding thereof, from Age, Damp, or other Injury, have become unsound and damaged, it was Enacted, That it should and might be lawful for any Inspector General, or Inspector or other Officer acting under the Trustees of the Linnen Board, to examine, as often as he should think necessary, any Cask containing Flax Seed or Hemp Seed, although the same should have been so branded; and if the Seed contained in any such Cask should be found unsound, damaged, mixed, or in anyway unfit for sowing, to require Security to be given that the same should not be sown or sold for sowing, but be made up into Oil, or exported from the said Kingdom; and if any Person should refuse or prevent any Flax Seed or Hemp Seed from being so examined, or should, after such Requisition made, and until Security should be given, sell or dispose of, or suffer to be sold or disposed of in any Way, any Part of such Seed, and should be convicted thereof upon Oath before any Magistrate, he or she should forfeit the Sum of Twenty Shillings for every Bushel, or Part of a Bushel so sold or disposed of, or permitted to be sold or disposed of, and all the Seed remaining, touching which such Requisition had been made, and the Cask or Casks wherein the same is contained, should be forfeited.

Your Committee then proceeded to examine Mr. Charles Duffin, Inspector General of Linnen Manufacture for the Pro-

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vinces of Leinster, Munster, and Connaught, which Examination they have annexed to their Report.

And it appears to Your Committee, upon the Result of the Whole, that further Regulations are requisite for securing an adequate and sufficient Examination of Flax Seed imported into Ireland; and that to attain this Object it would be expedient to provide, that the Persons employed to inspect the Flax Seed imported, should be approved and recommended by the Trustees of the Linen Board of Ireland.

APPENDIX.

Appendix (A.)

Examination of Mr. CHARLES DUFFIN, Inspector
General of Linen Manufacture, in Leinster, Munster, and
Connaught.

BY whom was you appointed to that Office?
The Linen Board, in 1791.

Mr. Duffin.

What are the Duties of your Office?

My Duty is prescribed by an Act of the Parliament of Ireland, 21 and 22 Geo. III. c. 35. s. 29.—It is to go round the Three Provinces Once a Year, and as often as the Board requests, to make my Report upon the Growth of Flax, to inspect into the Conduct of the County Inspectors (who are also appointed by the Board) and to see that the Premiums given by the Board are properly distributed.

Have you, in the Discharge of your Duty, been directed by the Board at any Time to make any particular Enquiries into the State of Flax Seed imported?

Yes, in 1795 particularly, and also in every subsequent Year.

State the Result of your Enquiries, as far as you think them material, in each of those Years.

In 1795 Mr. Wilson, the American Consul, imported into Ireland between 4 and 500 Hogheads of Flax Seed from the Northern Ports of America, all which were branded on the Quay at Dublin by the Collectors People as sound Seed fit for sowing. Upon Mr. Wilson's offering it for Sale, 80 Hogheads were found unfit for sowing, which he separated from the sound Seed, and 78 Hogheads of those 80 were sold to a Man of the Name of Burn in Drogheda; upon getting this Information, I proceeded to Drogheda to prevent as much as possible the Sale of it, but 70 Hogheads had been sold, before I arrived, to the Country People, and which Seed produced no Crop; not having Power to seize the Seed, I could only warn the People from buying it. In consequence
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Mr. Duffin.

of this I waited upon Mr. Foster, and represented to him the Necessity of having some Legislative Measure to enable the Officers of the Board to prevent the Distribution of bad Seed after its being branded; and an Act was passed by the Parliament of Ireland in 1797, 37 Geo. III. c. 61. s. 4. by which the Inspector General, or any Officer under the Trustees of the Linen Board, is empowered to examine, as often as he pleases, any Cask of Flax Seed, although branded, and if unfit for sowing, to require Security against its being sown, or sold for the Purpose of being sown, and to require it to be made into Oil, or export it. In 1797, immediately after the passing of the Act, I seized, in the Counties of Longford, Westmeath, and Meath, several Hogheads of Flax Seed which had been sent into the Markets for sowing, and I brought it back to Dublin, and the Owners never applied for it again. Mr. O'Reiley, a Magistrate of the Counties of Meath and Cavan, sent me above 170 Affidavits of the Failure of Part of that Seed which I seized, and stated there would have been more could he have attended to take them. In that Summer I went through those Counties, and found that the People had scarcely One-third the usual Crop of Flax. In 1798 I received a Letter from Mr. Foster, stating, that he had got Information from the Secretary to the Linen Board of Scotland, that 2,000 Hogheads, which the Officer of their Board would not permit to be sold for sowing in Scotland, had been exported to Ireland, upon which Mr. Foster desired me to exert myself to stop the Sale of it, and to give Notice to the other Inspectors to do the same. This Information I did not get till about the 20th of May, when the Seed had then been mostly sold. I examined the Storehouses in Dublin, and found about 100 Hogheads. When I found, upon Enquiry, that Seed of that Description had been imported into different Ports of Ireland, and that it had been sold, I could only get hold of a small Quantity in the Port of Dublin, which was afterwards sold for Oil. In the Summer following I found, from the Report of my Brother Officers, that a great Failure had taken place in the Crops of Flax in the Counties of Tyrone, Armagh, and that Part of the County of Derry which lies on the Banks of Lochneagh, which I have Reason to believe was owing to the Badness of the Seed sown; the general Crop in 1798 was a good one. With respect to Part of what I saw myself, which was 300 Hogheads; and which came into Sligo from the Port of Derry, the Inspector at Sligo wrote to me, when he saw the Seed, to know what he should do with it, as he suspected the Seed was bad: I was not in Dublin when the letter came, and he did not get Directions from me under a Fortnight. I directed him to seize it; before he got my Directions all but 25 or 30 Hogheads had been sold, which he seized; it was given to the Owners upon Security that they would export it, or make it into Oil. I saw those Hogheads, and found them to be mixed old Memel Seed; those Hogheads were branded, but I had no Means of knowing at what Port. By mixed Seed, I mean Seed

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of different Years Growth; the fresher the Flax Seed is, the more Oil there is in it, and therefore the better calculated for Vegetation; the older Seed is in general dry and less fit for Vegetation, consequently the Crop will be unequal in Height, and the shorter Part will in general be lost. There were Actions brought at the Sessions at Sligo by the People who purchased the bad Seed, for Indemnification for the Failure of their Crops, and they recovered Damages. In 1799, I received Information that a Quantity of Seed was on the Quays at Dublin which was bad. I immediately went to the Quays, and examined several Hundred Hogheads, and at last I discovered 220 which I conceived not fit for sowing; the Owner insisted they were, and I recommended to have a Jury sworn to have it ascertained, which was done the next Day. The Jury were composed of Three of the first Merchants in Dublin, and the Result was, they condemned between 30 and 40 Hogheads; it was immediately known that I had been inspecting the Seed, and no Person would buy it afterwards; the Owners exported it, or sold it for Oil, I don't know which. The above Hogheads had all been branded. In 1800 and 1801, very few Seizures were made in my District. In 1801, the Crops in my District failed, which I attributed to the very dry Season, and the great Deficiency in the Quantity of Land sown with Flax, in consequence of the high Price of Provisions. In February 1802, I reported to the Linen Board my Opinion upon Flax Seed. I have stated at several Times to Gentlemen of the Board, the Frauds committed by selling damaged and unsound Flax Seed, and I was then called upon by the Board to make a General Report thereon, which I did.

Appendix (B.)

Have the Linen Board any Inspectors at the different principal Ports where Flax Seed is imported?

Yes, at Dublin, Newry, Belfast, Derry, Sligo, Cork, Limerick, and Waterford: Every County has an Inspector besides.

Is there any Restriction upon the Board with respect to appointing Inspectors, as to Qualification?

The Restriction is, that no one shall be appointed who has not been bred to the Linen Manufacture.

Are they bound to make a Return of their Conduct?

Yes, every Quarter, upon Oath, and the Inspector General must certify that they have received it before they can get their Salaries.

What did the Linen Board do in consequence of your Report?

They examined several Gentlemen who were Importers of Flax Seed, with respect to the Mode I proposed, which they all approved of, except one Person, who objected to there being any Fee. They all agreed,

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Mr. Duffin.

(as I understood) in the Measure I suggested, and the Board entered into the following Resolution :

Resolved,

" That this Board do approve of the Report made by Mr. Inspector General Duffin, and that it is their Opinion that a Bill should be offered to the Consideration of Parliament, to carry into Effect the Measures recommended by that Report.

Ordered,

" That the Solicitor do prepare a Draft of a Bill to be laid before Parliament, to carry the Intention of the Board into Effect."

Did this Examination take place before the Linen Board?

Certainly; and Notices were sent by the Board to the principal importing Merchants of Dublin to attend. I saw Three who attended there.

What was done in consequence of the Order of the Board?

A Bill was prepared accordingly; which I brought to London, and gave to Mr. Foster; the Draft was shewn to five or six of the principal importing Merchants. The Draft was the same in Principle, but not quite so full as the one submitted to Parliament.

May it not frequently happen that bad Seed may be put into Hogheads, in the Interior of the Country, that have been branded, and contained good Seed on Importation?

I have detected Persons in the very Act of doing so; but it was principally done with the Seed of a former Year's Importation, mixed with the new-arrived Seed: But it has also been done by putting inferior Seed in American Hogheads that had, on Importation, contained good Seed, and branded.

Does it not happen that Seed good on Importation, and branded as such, may, from Neglect and other Circumstances, become bad before the Time of Sale?

It may by keeping over a Year, or by remaining four or five Months in a damp Store.—It is no uncommon Thing to store the Seed imported after the sowing Season is over, and not to get it branded till the following Year.

Under the Provisions of the Linen Laws, as they now stand, is it not possible that the Evils complained of may, in a great Measure, happen without any Neglect on the Part of the Collectors?

Several Frauds may happen by bad Stores and mixing of Seed after being branded; but a great Part of the general Complaint arises from
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the Neglect of Persons employed by the Collectors to inspect and brand the Seed.

Mr. Duffin.

What was the Average Quantity of Flax Seed imported into Ireland in the last 10 Years?

Between 41 and 42,000 Hogheads.

How much Flax Seed was sown last Year?

About 20,000 Hogheads. The usual Quantity sown is about 30,000 Hogheads. The Import last Year I understand to be about 50,000 Hogheads, although the Custom House Returns make it more; some Part, however, of this has been re-exported to England for making Oil.

Appendix (B.)

AT a Meeting of the TRUSTEES of the Linnen and Hempen Manufacture of Ireland, at their House at the Linnen Hall, on Tuesday the 2d Day of February 1802;

Present 41 Members;

Right Honourable David Latouche in the Chair;

A Report from Mr. Inspector General Duffin, relative to damaged Flax Seed, was presented to the Board; and read, as follows:

To the Right Honourable and Honourable the Trustees of the Linnen and Hempen Manufacture of Ireland.

My Lords and Gentlemen,

Since I have had the Honour of being employed by this Board (now Eleven Years) the Complaints against the Venders of unsound and mixed Flax Seed have been rather increasing. In the Year 1798 an Act was passed, empowering your Inspectors General, and other Inspectors, to examine all Flax Seed, notwithstanding its having been branded by the legal Officers (the Port Collectors) as fit for sowing; and if found mixed, damaged, or in anyway unfit for sowing, to seize such Seed, and demand Security from the Holders that it should not be sold for that Purpose; this has prevented considerable Quantities of unsound Seed from being sold for sowing, but still some Thousands of Hogheads have escaped, and many Actions been brought against the Venders for so doing, and

Mr. Duff.

for which they have been punished at the Rate of £. 3. per Hoghead; a very small Recompence for the Injury sustained, first by the Poor and second by the Country at large.

I beg to observe, that every Hoghead of Flax Seed will sow One Acre Three Roods, Irish Measure. If good Seed it will produce 8.4 Stone on an Average of rough Flax fit for the Hatchel, which, at a moderate Price, would sell for £. 42; but in the Hands of a Manufacturer it is of much greater Value, as it employs the Women and Children in the Autumn Months, preparing it for Spinning, and in the Remainder of the Year working it up into Yarn; the Labour of Preparation they set little Value on, consequently, can bring their Yarn to Market full 20 per Cent. cheaper, and support their Families better, than when they are obliged to go to Market for Flax, and particularly if it be Foreign.

To prevent the Evil complained of is to shut the Door against unsound, mixed, or damaged Seed when first imported: That Power at present is vested in the several Port Collectors. Those Gentlemen know not the Difference between good and bad Seed, and trust the Inspection to One or Two Men at each Port of a low Situation in Life, many of whom I am certain can have no Knowledge of the Linen Branch, or of what Seed is fit for sowing. In support of what I state, there have been upwards of 2,000 Hogheads, within these Two Years, stopped by your Officers in different Parts of the Kingdom, that had been branded by those people employed by the Collectors, and double that Quantity escaped, to the manifest Injury of the Individuals that bought it for sowing, and ultimate Loss to the staple Manufacture. If the Power was vested in this honourable Board (and which I humbly conceive it ought to be) as Guardians of the Linen and Hempen Manufactures, they could appoint proper Persons at each Port conversant in every Branch of the Business, to examine, in the first Instance, all Flax Seed imported; and secondly, by inspecting, in the Months of January and February of every Year, all the Seed that remained from the preceding Season before the new arrived, I am of Opinion the Evil complained of would be completely got rid of. The Seed of the former Year, particularly American, when kept in a dry Store, will produce a good Crop, but Dutch will not, unless started out of the Hoghead, or at least one End of it kept open. The Hogheads in which Dutch Seed arrives, are old Wine Vessels made very tight, so as to admit no Air, and are besides impregnated with the Lees of the Wine, which injures the vegetative Quality of the Seed when remaining in the Hoghead for a Year. Memel Flax Seed is in general of an inferior Quality, and not fit to be held over a second Season for sowing.

I beg leave further to observe, that the Board of Trade in Scotland will not permit an Hoghead of Flax Seed or Hemp Seed to be imported into

into that Kingdom without being first inspected by their own Officers, and that the Collectors of Ports have nothing to do with it. In the Year 1798, near 2,000 Hogheads of Flax Seed were exported from Scotland to this Kingdom, that would not be allowed to be sold there for sowing. It was entered however at the Ports here, and branded as fit for that Purpose. Mr. Foster had Notice of it, I believe, from Mr. Dundas, but the Information came too late, as more than Two-thirds of it had been sold for sowing at a low Rate, which prevented the Sale of good sound Seed, the poorer Class of People being tempted by a cheap Article. That Part of its Produce which came under my Inspection, did not yield One-third of a reasonable Crop. I believe the late Deficiency happened in Ulster.

Mr. Duffin.

I have the Honour to be,
My Lords and Gentlemen,
Your most obedient and faithful Servant,
C. DUFFIN.

Dublin,
February 2, 1802.

